

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A computer-implemented method of retrieving product distribution information comprising:
 - (a) storing first relationship information and 5 second relationship information, said relationship information identifying a buyer, a seller and a product to be provided from said seller to said buyer,
 - (b) said first relationship information 10 identifying a first entity as said buyer, a second entity as said seller, and a first product as said product,
 - (c) said second relationship information identifying said second entity as said buyer, a third entity as said seller, and 15 said first product as said product,
 - (d) retrieving said first relationship information,
 - (e) retrieving said second relationship 20 information based on the identity of said seller and the identity of said product contained in said first relationship information.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising
the step of storing third relationship information
identifying said third entity as said buyer, a fourth
entity as said seller, and said first product as said
5 product.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein said product
is a stamp

10 *Ma17* 4. The method of claim 1 wherein said first
product is a part of a second product and said first
relationship identifies a second product containing said
part

15 5. The method of claim 1 wherein said product
is a service or a product and a service.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein said steps of
storing relationship information further comprises
20 storing the compensation which seller agrees to accept
for said product from said buyer.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein said
compensation is the price of the product.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein said compensation is a commission.

Ref 54 9. The method of claim 1 wherein said first entity is a class of entities.

10 10. The method of claim 7 wherein said class is the general public.

11 11. The method of claim 7 wherein said step of retrieving said first relationship information comprises displaying to said first entity at least two products associated with those relationships identifying said first entity as said buyer, and determining said first relationship information based upon the product selected by an entity of said class.

12 12. The method of claim 1 further comprising 10 the step of storing a description of said product.

13 13. The method of claim 12 wherein said description comprises an image, a textual description, or an image and a textual description.

14 12. The method of claim 1 further comprising
the steps of:

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(a) said first entity requesting said
first product from said second entity
and storing said request,

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(b) storing a request for said first
product by said second entity to said
third entity based on the second
relationship information retrieved
during said step of retrieving said
second relationship information.

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15 13. The method of claim *12* further comprising
notifying said third entity of said request.

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14 14. The method of claim *12* wherein said
requests includes the quantity of said product.

17 15. The method of claim *12* wherein said
requests include the shipping destination or destinations
of said product

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16. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of retrieving said second relationship information comprises searching for relationships wherein the buyer of the relationship identifies the seller of said first relationship and the product of the relationship identifies the product of said first relationship.

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17. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of storing additional relationships associated with said product; repeating said step of retrieving said second relationship by recursively assuming that some of the values of said first relationship are equal to the values of said second relationship.

15 20 18. The method of claim 17 wherein said step of repeating terminates when there is no relationship identifying the seller of said second relationship as a buyer of the same product in another relationship.

20 *data 17* 19. A computer-implemented method of providing information about a product including typesetting comprising

(a) storing data representing a product available from a first member to a class of customers, said product including typesetting;

5 (b) storing data representing an agreement by a second member to provide said product to said first member;

10 (c) receiving a customer request from a customer of said class of customers for said product, said customer request including typesetting information describing said typesetting;

(d) storing said customer request;

(e) retrieving said agreement based on the identity of said product and said first member associated with said customer request;

15 (f) generating a second request that said second member provide said product to said first member, said second request identifying said typesetting information;

(g) transmitting said second request to said second member.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein said class of customers comprises a single entity.

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21. The method of claim 19 further comprising
storing data representing an agreement by a third member
to provide said product to said second member; retrieving
said agreement by said third member based on the identity
5 of said product and the identity of said second member.

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22. The method of claim 21 wherein said
typesetting information comprises an image.

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23. The method of claim 22 further comprising
the steps of receiving a plurality of requests from a
plurality of customers of said class of customers, and
wherein the image associated with one customer request is
different from the image associated with another customer
15 request.

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24. The method of claim 23 wherein said step
of storing said customer requests from said customers
comprises storing said different images in the same file
20 format.

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25. The method of claim 24 further comprising
the step of said second member retrieving said image.

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26. The method of claim ~~25~~ further comprising
the step of converting said image from said file format
to a different file format before said step of said
second member retrieving said image.

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27. The method of claim ~~23~~ wherein said step
of storing said customer requests from said customers
comprises storing said different images in different file
formats.

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28. The method of claim ~~27~~ wherein said
different file formats correspond with file formats used
by said members.

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29. The method of claim ~~29~~ further comprising
the step of manufacturing said product.

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30. The method of claim ~~29~~ wherein said
product is a stamp and said typesetting relates to the
impression on said stamp.

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31. The method of claim ~~29~~ wherein said
requests identify said typesetting information by
reference to information stored in a database.

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32. The method of claim 19 wherein said step
of receiving said customer request comprises receiving
said customer request over a global telecommunications
5 network.

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33. A computer-implemented method of
retrieving information comprising:

(a) storing first relationship information and second
10 relationship information, said relationship
information identifying a buyer, a seller and a
first product provided from said seller to said
buyer,

(b) said first relationship information identifying a
15 first entity as said buyer, a second entity as
said seller, and a first product as said product,

(c) said second relationship information identifying
said second entity as said buyer, a third entity
as said seller, and a second product as said
20 product,

(d) retrieving said first relationship information,

(e) retrieving said second relationship information
based on the identity of said seller identified
in said first relationship information.

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34. A system for storing information about buyers and sellers of products comprising:

5 (a) a database containing a plurality of relationship records, each said relationship record identifying a buyer, a seller and a product provided from said seller to said buyer,

10 (b) a processor for retrieving a second relationship record based on a first relationship record, whereby said buyer entity identified in said second relationship record is the same entity as the seller identified in said second relationship record, and whereby said product identified in said second relationship record is related to

15 said product identified in said first relationship record.

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35. The system of claim 34 wherein database is stored at a central location.

20 36. The system of claim 35 wherein said database is stored in a single server.

DATA 17 39. A system for storing information about relationships between buyers and sellers, said system maintained by an administrator, said system comprising:

5 (a) data representing an agreement by a middle entity to provide a product to a bottom entity in exchange for compensation and an agreement by a top entity to provide a related product to said middle entity in exchange for compensation, none of said entities being said administrator, and

10 (b) a processor for utilizing said data to process a request for said product from said bottom entity to said middle entity such that said request generates a request for said product from said middle entity to said top entity.

15 *DATA 17* 40 38. The system of claim 37 wherein said data further comprises another agreement by another entity to provide said product to said top entity.

20 *DATA 17* 41 39. A computer-implemented method of retrieving information relating to a request for personalized products, said method comprising:

(a) storing an agreement by a second entity to provide a product to a first entity,

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(b) storing an agreement by a third entity to provide said product to said second entity,

(c) said first entity requesting said product from said second entity such that the request includes modifying the product in accordance with personalization information provided by said first entity, said personalization information being particular to said first entity, and

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(d) generating a request for said product from said second entity to third entity based on said stored agreements, said request from said second entity to said third entity including said personalization information.

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42 *40.* The method of claim *29* wherein said personalization information comprises an image.

43 *41.* A computer-implemented method of selling products over the world-wide web, said method comprising:

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(a) providing a database centrally storing agreements between a plurality of members to sell a product;

(b) sending a web page from a first member to a customer, said web page identifying a product

that is the subject of one of said agreements of
said database;

(c) receiving a request for said product from said
customer, said request including an image
5 provided by said customer;

(d) generating a first purchase order from said first
member to a second member based on a second
agreement stored in said database, said purchase
order including said image, and

10 (e) generating a second purchase order from said
second member to a third member based on a third
agreement stored in said database, said purchase
order including said image.

15 *44*
42. The method of claim *41* further comprising
the step of said members storing said agreements by
sending information relating to such agreement to said
database.

20 *45*
43. The method of claim *41* wherein said
product comprises a stamp having an impression
representing said image.

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44. The method of claim 41 wherein said product comprises a printed item or sign containing said image.

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